

Taxonomy for Social-Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning

Active exploration – Manipulating materials, thoughts and ideas, which may lead to understanding or knowledge

Active learners - Children who learn by “doing,” “participating,” and “playing”

Acknowledge - Show recognition or interest with facial expression or words

Activities - Experiences planned by the educator or spontaneous that create opportunities for children to explore and learn about their world

Approaches to play and learning – Child’s characteristic responses to play and learning situations, such as the child’s curiosity, flexibility, persistence, reasoning and problem solving

Appropriate – The usually expectations for a child’s age and ability

Attachment - The strong emotional tie that children feel with special people in their lives (family members, significant friends, and educators)

Autonomy - a sense of being a separate, independent self

Cause and effect - A relationship between actions or events such that one is a result of the other

Collaboration - Adults or children working together as a team to solve problems and accomplish tasks in order to achieve a common goal.

Communication - The act of understanding and/or expressing the wants, needs, feelings and thoughts with others. Forms of communication include crying, vocalizing, facial expressions, speech, gestures, sign language, and/or pictures

Competency - Ability to perform a specific task, action or function successfully

Conflict - A situation where one person or group has needs, desires, opinions, or goals that interfere those of another person or group

Consistent - Steady, and free from contradiction

Cooperate - To work or act with others willingly and agreeably

Creativity - Showing originality or imagination

Cultural continuity - Central aspects of a family’s culture, such as beliefs or traditions, which are shared with an educator who respects and tries to maintain these aspects to provide consistency for young children

Culture - Shared attitudes, beliefs, histories, arts, customs, and social or family practices that generally characterize a particular group of people

Curiosity – An expressed desire to know or learn more about people and things, especially the new and novel, and eventually abstract ideas

Delay - Slow to progress in one or more domains of development or learning

Demonstrate - To show clearly

Dispositions – An individual's tendency to act in a certain manner under given circumstances

Dual language learner - Children, age birth to five years, who are learning two or more languages

Emotional regulation - Complex process that involves initiating, inhibiting, or modulating one's state or behavior

Empathy - Being aware of and responding to the feelings of others

Engage - To become involved with or to be attentive to people and/ or experiences

Enthusiasm – Expression of excitement and interest

Executive function – Set of mental processes that include being able to break down a task into its components, organize a plan of work, follow through on it, and reflect on the success of one's efforts

Examine - To observe, test, or investigate

Experiment - An action used to discover something unknown; to test a principle or idea

Explore - To investigate or study

Family - Refers to the closest relationships that a child has, customarily thought of as a mother or father, but often includes foster family, grandparents and others who are significant in the child's life

Flexibility - The ability to change or alter plans in response to changing information and goals

Home language - First language a child learns to speak

Imitate - To copy, pretend or practice the activity of another

Independence – The ability to be self-sufficient, to self-organize, and to self-manage

Initiative – The ability to begin, take action independently

Investigate - To study the details, to examine, or to observe in order to gain knowledge

Invite - To request participation in an activity or communication

Model - The act of teaching children through example, by demonstrating the desired behavior or action

Open-ended questions - Questions that have no right or wrong answer; generally used to encourage children to engage in extended conversation and higher order thinking

Parallel play - Two children playing side-by-side, each involved in a separate individual activity

Parallel talk - An adult narrating to a child, describing what the child is doing

Passive - Not active; tending not to respond or participate

Peers - Children who are about the same age

Persistence - The ability to maintain attention despite interruptions or distractions

Play - Engagement in a physical or mental activity that has no purpose or objective outside of pure enjoyment or amusement

Problem solving – The processes to explore questions or situations and try different solutions

Proficiency - Mastery of a specific behavior or skill

Prompt - To encourage an action or behavior

Prop - An object used by children during play

Prosocial behavior - Showing concern, cooperation, kindness and consideration for others; demonstrating a sense of caring for others

Reciprocal - Present or existing on both sides; mutual

Reflection – Recalling an object or event in one's mind, analyzing it, and then planning to carry out next steps

Relational processes – Exchanges and interpretation of responses with teachers and peers

Relationship skills—Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed

Resilience – The ability to bounce back after setback, hindrance or frustration and retain temperament, personality, and spirit

Respect - To show esteem for another person; to communicate that his or her ideas, feelings and needs are worthy of consideration

Responsive – Reacting in a well-timed manner to another person

Responsible decision-making — Making decisions based on consideration of safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one's school and community

Routines - A pattern of events or interactions planned and occurring on a regular basis

Scaffolding - Appropriate adult mediation to help children accomplish more difficult tasks than they could normally do on their own

Inquiry - The process of exploring, experimenting, and asking questions

Self-awareness & self-concept—The ability to recognize, and assess personal feelings, interests, values and strengths and their influence on behavior

Self-efficacy - The perception that one is capable of successfully making decisions, accomplishing tasks, and meeting goals

Self-help skills - Behaviors necessary to care for oneself such as dressing, feeding, and toileting

Self-management - The ability to handle one's emotions in productive ways, being aware of feelings, monitoring them, and modifying them when necessary so that they aid rather than impede the ways in which the child is able to cope with varying situations

Self-motivation – The ability to engage and expend the necessary energy to achieve the goal

Self-regulation - A deep, internal mechanism that enables a person to engage in mindful, intentional, and thoughtful behaviors

Self-talk - Words or dialogue adults use to describe what they are doing

Social awareness:- Understanding what others are feeling; being able to take others' perspective; appreciating and interacting positively with diverse groups

Social competence – The ability to demonstrate conscious control of thoughts and actions in social interactions

Social management: The ability to take others' perspectives, understand their feelings and empathize with them, and appreciate others' similarities and differences

Social relationships: - The healthy relationships and interactions with adults and peers

Social processes – The understanding of self and others, taking in social information accurately to make good decisions, interact successfully and regulate behavior

Strategies – Collection of methods to promote development or learning

Temperament - The unique way a child responds to the world

Tolerance – The capacity to accept how others are different from you

Tools - Anything used or created to accomplish a task or purpose

Transition - Time of change or moving children from one activity or place to another

Trial and error- Attempting to solve a problem by trying different approaches

Adapted from:

Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers (MA), CASEL, Head Start,